

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Amend the claims as follows.

Claims 1-25 (Canceled).

26. (Currently Amended) A peptide ~~consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region~~ consisting of amino acids 1 to 20 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

27. (Allowed) A peptide consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region consisting of amino acids 7 to 26 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

28. (Allowed) A peptide consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region consisting of amino acids 13 to 32 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

29. (Currently Amended) A peptide ~~consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region~~ consisting of amino acids 37 to 56 of the HCV polyprotein of

an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

30. (Allowed) A peptide consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region consisting of amino acids 49 to 68 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

31. (Currently Amended) ~~A peptide consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region~~ consisting of amino acids 61 to 80 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

32. (Currently Amended) ~~A peptide consisting of at least 5 to less than 20 amino acids located in the region~~ consisting of amino acids 73 to 92 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

33. (Previously Presented) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 26, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

34. (Allowed) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 27, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

35. (Allowed) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 28, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

36. (Previously Presented) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 29, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

37. (Allowed) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 30, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

38. (Previously Presented) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 31, and,

(b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

39. (Previously Presented) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

- (a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to claim 32, and,
- (b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

40. (Previously Presented) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 26, and

a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

41. (Allowed) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 27, and

a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

42. (Allowed) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 28, and

a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

43. (Previously Presented) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 29, and  
a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

44. (Allowed) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 30, and  
a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

45. (Previously Presented) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 31, and  
a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

46. (Previously Presented) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to claim 32, and  
a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.

47. (Previously Presented) A peptide according to claim 26 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 1 to 20 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 1.

48. (Allowed) A peptide according to claim 27 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 7 to 26 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 2.

49. (Allowed) A peptide according to claim 28 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 13 to 32 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 4.

50. (Previously Presented) A peptide according to claim 29 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 37 to 56 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 5.

51. (Allowed) A peptide according to claim 30 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 49 to 68 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 6.

52. (Previously Presented) A peptide according to claim 31 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 61 to 80 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 7.

53. (Previously Presented) A peptide according to claim 32 wherein said amino acids spanning positions 73 to 92 of the HCV polyprotein is SEQ ID NO: 8.

54. (new) A peptide consisting of 5, 6, 8, 12 or 20 amino acids of amino acids 1 to 20 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

55. (new) A peptide consisting of 5, 6, 8, 12 or 20 amino acids of amino acids 37 to 56 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

56. (new) A peptide consisting of 5, 6, 8, 12 or 20 amino acids of amino acids 61 to 80 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

57. (new) A peptide consisting of 5, 6, 8, 12 or 20 amino acids of amino acids 73 to 92 of the HCV polyprotein of an HCV isolate which is capable of providing for immunological competition with at least one strain of HCV.

58. (new) A method for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis C virus present in a body fluid comprising the steps of:

- (a) contacting a body fluid of a person to be diagnosed with a peptide according to any one of claims 54-57, and,
- (b) detecting an immunological complex formed between antibodies in said body fluid and said peptide as an indication of the presence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus.

59. (new) A kit for the detection of anti-hepatitis C virus antibodies in a body fluid, comprising: a peptide according to any one of claims 54-57, and



a means for detecting an immunological complex formed between said peptide and said antibodies.